1.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database comprising the steps of:

     a)   sending at least one message requesting updated contact information to a contact destination of at least one contact from a plurality of contacts stored

5   within the electronic contact information database of a user; and

     b)   upon receiving a return message with updated contact information from the at least one contact, automatically updating the contact information database with the updated contact information.

10 2.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 1 wherein the message is a facsimile message and comprising the step of:

     analysing an electronic image of the received return facsimile message to automatically determine the updated contact information in an electronic form.

15 3.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 2 wherein the step of analysing an electronic image of the received return facsimile message includes the step of performing optical character recognition on the received return facsimile message.

20 4.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 3 comprising the step of generating an electronic image of the received return facsimile message.

5.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in

25 claim 4 wherein upon receiving a transmission error when contacting the at least one contact, providing an indication of the contact and of transmission error message.

6.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 5 comprising the step of determining a success of the step of sending and when the

30 step of sending fails, providing an indication of the contact and of the transmission failure.

7.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 6 wherein the contact request update transmission is resent to verify that the return message was not received due to a temporary communication failure.

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8.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 1 wherein the message is an electronic message and comprising the step of:

automatically extracting from the received return electronic message updated contact information therein.

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9.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 8 wherein the user is a subscriber to a contact list update service and wherein the at least a contact is other than a user to the contact list update service.

15   10.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 9 comprising the steps of:

verifying the authenticity of each electronic contact information message received at the contact system.

20   11.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 8 wherein the electronic message comprises:

message body text containing contact information for at least one contact information field for verification.

25   12.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 8 wherein the electronic message comprises data for, when activated within a system, providing an automated reply process for automatically intercepting update request electronic messages and for automatically replying thereto.

13.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
claim 12 wherein the automated reply process is electronic message platform
independent.

5   14.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
claim 12 wherein the automated reply process includes processes for entering and storing
of contact data.

15.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
10   claim 14 comprising the steps of:
        entering contact information of the contact; and storing the contact information of
the contact within memory accessible to the automated reply process.

16.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
15   claim 14 wherein an electronic flag associated with the at least one contact is stored
indicative of one of the automated reply process being installed on the contact system of
the at least one contact.

17.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
20   claim 16 where update request messages are sent more frequently to contacts with the
electronic flag enabled.

18.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in
claim 17 where the information is only updated when the user initiates an update request.
25

19.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database comprising the
steps of:
        receiving an electronic message at a system of a contact by an electronic message
application;

intercepting the electronic message by an automated reply filter cooperatively in execution with the electronic message application prior to storage thereof within an inbox of the electronic message application;

parsing information fields within the intercepted electronic message to determine

5   that the electronic message is one of an update request message and another message;

providing all other messages for storage within the inbox;

generating a new electronic message including data indicative of current contact information for the contact in reply to a determined update request message; and

transmitting the generated new electronic message via a communication network.

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20.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 19 wherein the new electronic message generated by the automated reply process contains information retrieved from the memory accessible to the automated reply process.

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21.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 20 absent a step of storing an electronic update message within the inbox.

22.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in

20   claim 19 comprising the steps of:

providing updated contact information to a first system, the updated contact information relating to a user of the first system;

transmitting an electronic message including the updated contact information to a second other system via an electronic communication medium;

25   receiving the transmitted updated contact information at the second other system;

automatically extracting from the received updated contact information contact information relating to the user of the first system; and,

automatically updating the contact information of the user of the first system within a contact database in dependence upon the extracted information.

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23.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 22 wherein the updated contact information is transmitted as an electronic message and wherein the step of receiving includes the following steps:

　　　　receiving an electronic message at the second other system by an electronic

5   message application;

　　　　intercepting the electronic message by an automated reply filter cooperatively in execution with the electronic message application prior to storage thereof within an inbox of the electronic message application;

　　　　parsing information fields within the intercepted electronic message to determine

10   that the electronic message is one of update contact information and another message;

　　　　providing all other messages for storage within the inbox.

24.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database comprising the steps of:

15   　　　　providing updated contact information to a first system, the updated contact information relating to a user of the first system;

　　　　transmitting an electronic message including the updated contact information to a second other system via an electronic communication medium;

　　　　receiving the transmitted updated contact information at the second other system;

20   　　　　automatically extracting from the received updated contact information contact information relating to the user of the first system; and,

　　　　automatically updating the contact information of the user of the first system within a contact database in dependence upon the extracted information.

25   25.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database comprising the steps of:

　　　　transmitting an electronic message to a system of a contact; and

　　　　awaiting a reply electronic message from the contact system for a predetermined amount of time.

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26.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 25 wherein the user is prompted to manually verify contact information after a predetermined number of update request transmissions sent to the contact system resulting in no response received from the contact system and no error electronic
5   messages received by a user system.

27.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 26 wherein the contact is determined valid after a predetermined number of successful update request transmissions resulting in successful reply electronic message
10   transmissions received at a user system.

28.   A method for updating an electronic contact information database as defined in claim 27 wherein the contact information is determined as incorrect after a predetermined number of successful update request transmissions result in error electronic messages
15   received by a user system.